DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 471 456 CG 032 132

TITLE	Drugs, Youth, and the Internet. Information Bulletin, October 2002.
INSTITUTION	Department of Justice, Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	No-2002-L0424-006
PUB DATE	2002-10-00
NOTE	9p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs2/2161/2161p.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Reference Materials - General (130)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adolescents; *Illegal Drug Use; *Internet; *Young Adults
IDENTIFIERS	Drug Trafficking

ABSTRACT

Adolescents and young adults have become the largest segment of the U.S. population with Internet access. Because of the large numbers of adolescents and young adults who have access to the Internet, the threat posed by drug-related activity occurring on the Internet is quite serious. The large number of young Americans accessing the Internet has encouraged illegitimate entrepreneurs--including drug offenders--to market and sell their products to young people through this powerful medium. This bulletin highlights the prevalence of drug-related information on the Internet, the most common drug types on the Internet, and challenges to identifying and investigating drug-related activities in cyberspace. (GCP)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 471 456

Drugs, Youth, and the Internet

Information Bulletin
October 2002

U.S. Department of Justice
National Drug Intelligence Center

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CG032132

ST COPY AVAILABLE

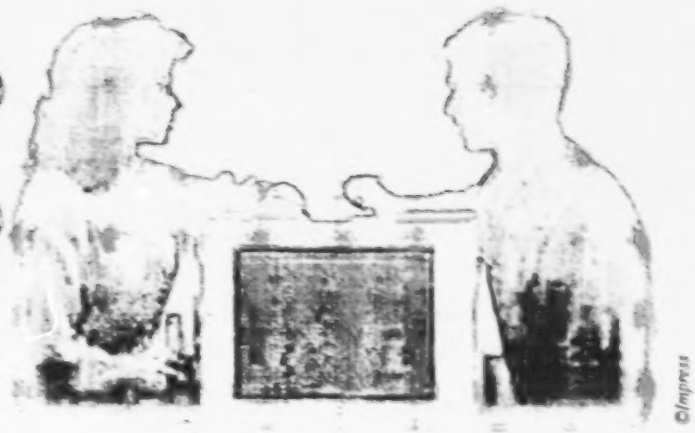
Product No. 2002-L0424-006

INFORMATION BULLETIN

OCTOBER 2002

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Drugs, Youth, and the Internet



Overview

Adolescents and young adults have become the largest segment of the U.S. population with Internet access. Approximately 30 million children in the United States under 18 currently use the Internet, and more than 40 million are expected to be online by 2005. Because of the large numbers of adolescents and young adults who have access to the Internet, the threat posed by drug-related activity occurring on the Internet is quite serious. The large number of young Americans accessing the Internet has encouraged illegitimate entrepreneurs—including drug offenders—to market and sell their products to young people through this powerful medium.

Drug-related activity is widespread on the Internet, and even the novice user has easy access to all the information needed to produce, cultivate, purchase, sell, or use any illegal drug, even relatively obscure ones. Many of the users participating in these drug-related activities are adolescents and young adults. Individuals who use illegal drugs or are contemplating their use can readily access information about them on Internet sites, including explanations of drug terminology and methods of use. Many of these sites popularize and glamorize drug use, and others implicitly promote use and experimentation. Drug distributors and customers utilize Internet sites to post and discuss drug prices. They also use Internet bulletin boards and chat rooms to arrange the sale of drugs or chemicals, which are then shipped to the customer for an agreed price. Recipes and detailed instructions for producing illicit drugs also are easily obtainable on the Internet. Many sites offer not only chemical formulas for drug production, but also easy-to-follow guidance about where and how to obtain precursor chemicals and necessary equipment without arousing the suspicion of law enforcement. Much of the information about drug production that is available on the Internet refers to marijuana, drug paraphernalia, or club drugs, which are all popular among young people.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Prevalence of Drug-Related Information on the Internet

The facilitation of drug use appears to be the most common drug-related activity on the Internet, and sites that facilitate drug use often are directed toward a younger audience. Many Internet sites and forums also promote the production and sale of illicit drugs.

Use. Information about drug use is readily available on the Internet. Adolescents and young adults who are curious about a particular drug may research it on the Internet and thereby become exposed to thousands of sites that expound upon the positive effects of the drug and downplay or deny any negative effects. These sites frequently explain and use drug terminology and slang, thereby further acclimating visitors to drug culture. Many Internet sites mislead visitors by explaining how to use drugs, implying that if the drugs are used properly (by following the instructions provided) they pose no risk to the user. In addition, there are sites that advise visitors about how to use readily available products, such as cold medications, in order to obtain euphoric effects.

Production. The Internet provides access to a vast amount of information about drug production, including processes, recipes, ingredients, and substitutes, and this information can be easily accessed by any individual with an Internet connection. Production equipment also is advertised widely, and chemicals needed in the production process can be ordered as well. Even the most inexperienced drug producer can easily obtain the instructions, chemicals, and equipment needed to synthesize many illegal drugs in a kitchen, bathroom, or basement laboratory. Misinformation is fairly common and can lead to serious injury, illness, or death.

Sale. Adolescents and young adults can easily search for user or wholesale quantities of drugs and find suppliers on the Internet. Illegal drugs and controlled substances are openly advertised, and suppliers arrange sales with customers via bulletin board discussions. Drug production equipment, chemicals, and other paraphernalia also are readily obtained through online stores. It is important to note that, as in the drug distribution arena outside the Internet, an individual who already has an established contact will have a much easier time purchasing drugs. For example, many Internet forums exist which are not indexed by search engines (not found by typing drug-related terminology into a search engine) and require word-of-mouth referral.

According to the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), early in 2000 authorities in Great Britain and Northern Ireland identified over 1,000 worldwide Internet sites offering to sell illicit drugs, mostly cannabis, but also MDMA, cocaine, and heroin. This is in direct violation of international drug control treaties. The Netherlands and Switzerland have the highest number of such sites, although individuals in the United States also sell illicit drugs via the Internet.

On February 24, 2000, the New York Police Department arrested a man for selling MDMA, GHB, ketamine, DXM (dextromethorphan), and more than 16 other substances over the Internet from Las Vegas. The sources for at least a portion of his drugs were several Chinese pharmaceutical companies. The man kept an extensive list of customers, many of them minors, from almost every U.S. state, and his operations extended to nine countries.

Source: Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department; *New York Daily News*

Most Common Drug Types on the Internet

Marijuana appears to be the most common drug promoted on the Internet, and information regarding its cultivation, use, and sale is widely available. Information regarding drug paraphernalia, most of which is marijuana paraphernalia, is also widespread. Information about MDMA

(ecstasy), LSD, GHB, and psilocybin mushrooms, all popular "club drugs"—so-called because they are available at dance clubs and raves—is also commonly exchanged via the Internet. Adolescents and young adults, the predominant abusers of club drugs, are most at risk to the threat posed by these Internet forums. An increasing number of sites are being established to cater to the youth party scene, serving as pointers to the next rave or nightclub gathering where club drugs are sold and used.

Raves

Throughout the 1990s, high energy, all-night dances known as raves, which feature hard-pounding techno-music and flashing laser lights, increased in popularity among teens and young adults. Raves occur in most metropolitan areas of the country. They can be either permanent dance clubs or temporary "weekend event" sites set up in abandoned warehouses, open fields, empty buildings, or civic centers.

Club drugs—a group of synthetic drugs that includes MDMA (ecstasy), GHB, LSD, ketamine, and others—are often sold at raves and dance clubs. MDMA is one of the most popular club drugs. Rave managers often sell water, pacifiers, and glow sticks at rave parties in order to enhance the effects of MDMA or to offset the negative effects of the drug.

Many raves are advertised on the Internet. Rave promoters often avoid using the term "rave" in their advertisements, and may advertise these events as techno parties or music festivals in order to avoid detection. Some have posted notices on the Internet which claim that the parties are "Christian" gatherings where drugs and alcohol will not be available, although subsequent law enforcement actions revealed that club drugs were being distributed and used by many attendees. Rave promoters usually do not reveal the exact location of the rave until the day of the event. Updated information regarding raves usually is disseminated through e-mail and prerecorded phone messages.

Marijuana and Related Drug Paraphernalia. Many Internet sites sell marijuana seeds, cultivation kits, and paraphernalia, or provide very detailed information about cannabis cultivation. For example, items such as growing kits, "high quality" bongs, and vaporizers can be purchased over the Internet. Free samples of marijuana seeds also may be found. Some Internet sites provide detailed information on methods used to smoke or inhale marijuana (via joint, pipe, or vaporizer) and instructions on how to roll various types of joints.

Most of the drug paraphernalia on the Internet is marijuana-related. Internet sites advertising the sale of drug paraphernalia are common. Many paraphernalia products are disguised as everyday items, sometimes by using an actual "shell" of an ordinary product. Among the most popular drug paraphernalia items sold online are "stealth pipes" or "incognito pipes," which look like ordinary copper tubing or household plumbing fixtures but are made to conceal and administer drugs. Other pipes resemble lip balm containers, highlighters, markers, lipstick cases, miniature flashlights, cigars, bullets, cigarette lighters, key chains, cigarette packs, makeup brushes, and mascara tubes. Some Internet sites provide instruction on how to make paraphernalia for drug use. Internet users may find sites that feature "bong designs" where detailed instructions tell readers how to make various types of "bongs" using household items such as mason jars, glass soda bottles, toilet paper rolls, PVC pipes, or tin foil.

MDMA. MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), also known as ecstasy, E, X, and Adam, is a stimulant and low-level hallucinogen. It is most popular among teens and young adults and is commonly used at raves and dance clubs. MDMA use is promoted and glamorized on many Internet sites and bulletin boards which allow users to discuss their MDMA experiences. Drug legalization and club or party sites often describe MDMA as a relatively benign drug with few negative side effects, although it is a dangerous drug that can cause severe hyperthermia (overheating), dehydration and, occasionally, death.

There is also an abundance of information on the Internet about the production of MDMA, and many participants in the rave culture access this information or share it in chat rooms or via e-mail. MDMA is synthesized from several precursor chemicals, most of which are federally controlled. Producers can use the Internet to identify suppliers of these chemicals, to obtain recipes and instructions on MDMA production, and to discuss production processes with other users. For example, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reported the arrest of two chemistry doctoral students, one in Georgia and one in Arizona, who used instructions from the Internet to produce MDMA, methamphetamine, and precursor chemicals. The students communicated with each other about their progress via e-mail.

GHB and Analogs. GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate), a central nervous system depressant, is a popular club drug that is used most commonly by teenagers and young adults. It is increasingly being produced in the United States, and amateur chemists are obtaining much of the production information and precursor chemicals they need from the Internet. GHB is also known as liquid ecstasy, soap, scoop, Georgia homeboy, grievous bodily harm, liquid X, and goop. Although GHB reportedly is available on the Internet, most of the products sold on the Internet are actually GHB analogs (drugs that possess chemical structures that closely resemble GHB). Some Internet distributors sell GHB kits, which contain two chemicals—GBL (gamma-butyrolactone, a GHB analog) and either sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide—that when combined, produce GHB. Other web sites sell both chemicals, but not as a kit. Other GHB analogs such as BD (1,4-butanediol), GHV (gamma-hydroxyvalerate), and GVL (gamma-valerolactone) are also sold. These analogs are either converted into GHB in the human body or give physical effects similar to GHB when ingested. GHB analogs often are marketed as nutritional supplements or as household products such as nail enamel remover. Many suppliers promote GHB (or its analogs) as a muscle growth supplement and advertise bodybuilding supplies and health supplements along with these chemicals.

Because of its sedative properties, GHB is often referred to as a date rape drug. In 2001 two brothers were sentenced to 4 years in prison for selling GHB date rape kits over the Internet to customers in New Jersey and other states. The brothers collected approximately $200,000 from GHB sales between March 1999 and January 2000.

Psilocybin/Psilocin. Hallucinogenic psilocybin mushrooms, also called magic mushrooms, are widely used by young people. Although the chemicals psilocybin and psilocin and the mushrooms that contain these chemicals are illegal, the spores necessary to grow the mushrooms are not. Therefore psilocybin mushroom spores can be legally purchased over the Internet. Complete kits and the supplies required for harvesting the mushrooms, including detailed instructions, can be easily purchased via the Internet.

LSD. LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), also known as acid, boomers, and yellow sunshine, is a hallucinogen that is commonly used by young people. Although LSD synthesis is a complex chemical procedure that requires the knowledge and skills of a trained chemist, recipes for making LSD are readily available on the Internet. Internet sites also sponsor chats, bulletin boards, or newsgroups to assist people in communicating with one another about LSD. In these forums, users share information by posting "tripping" experiences and exchanging tips regarding the best methods for shipping and distributing the drug to avoid detection by law enforcement. Bulletin boards and chat rooms also are used to arrange LSD sales.

Heroin. In many areas of the country, high purity heroin that effectively can be snorted or smoked, rather than injected, is becoming popular among middle- to upper-class teens and young adults. Seeds for growing opium poppies (which yield raw heroin) are sold via the Internet. Information regarding opium poppy cultivation and extraction is also available. Most information

available on the Internet about heroin use concerns either snorting or injecting, with injecting being the method most endorsed. Heroin, which is dangerously addictive and, in some cases, deadly, is promoted as a drug used at raves to "come down" from the effects of MDMA and to provide relief from stress and physical pain. Heroin sales are likely being arranged in chat rooms and web rings, and heroin use is promoted on many sites through the use of bulletin boards and chat rooms.

Cocaine/Crack. Information about the use of cocaine is readily available on the Internet, and cocaine use is often glamorized by both site owners and users. Internet sites dealing with cocaine use promulgate information through chat rooms, bulletins, or newsgroups that specifically discuss the different methods of abusing powdered cocaine and crack cocaine, such as snorting, injecting, smoking, and ingesting it. Information is readily available on a multitude of topics including dosage levels, legal considerations, the history of cocaine use, the differing psychological and physical effects of using powdered cocaine and crack cocaine, and the best paraphernalia to use for snorting, injecting, or smoking cocaine. There are also instructions and "recipes" for converting powdered cocaine to freebase or crack cocaine. In addition, an Internet-based "crack dealer locator service" provides information on crack cocaine dealers in major metropolitan areas. Cocaine price and purity reports for most states also can be found online.

Challenges

It is particularly difficult for law enforcement to identify illegal drug-related Internet activities because information can be exchanged and sales consummated quickly and with relative anonymity over the Internet. Drug offenders are increasingly taking advantage of sophisticated technologies to hide their identities and illicit actions. Many individuals who once made only a cursory attempt at security are now taking advantage of chat rooms, e-mails, and private web rings or are protecting their sites with encryption, hidden text, passwords, and registration requirements in an attempt to evade law enforcement.

Legislators and law enforcement personnel are forced to develop new legal concepts and investigative procedures that can be used to address drug-related activities in cyberspace without creating jurisdictional problems or violating First Amendment rights. Various elements of the drug culture, relying on the difficulties involved in investigating and prosecuting Internet-based crimes, have engaged in drug-related activity on the Internet with an aura of invincibility, believing that they are impervious to prosecution. However, some recent successes by law enforcement against sites and their managers have begun to change these views.

Outlook

The use of the Internet to facilitate the production, sale, and use of illegal drugs presents challenges to law enforcement unlike any previously encountered, and these challenges are likely to increase as Internet use among teens and young adults expands and new Internet-related technologies are developed. Internet use in other regions of the world is likely to increase in the coming years, and a parallel rise in Internet-related crimes will create legal and jurisdictional issues. As the number and proficiency of users expand in the coming years, drug-related threats to young people who use the Internet can only be expected to proliferate.

Policymakers and demand reduction advocates should be aware of both the positive and negative impacts of this powerful medium on the youth of the United States. Likewise, parents, law enforcement officials, drug treatment providers, and others who interact with adolescents and young adults who are or may possibly become involved with drugs should understand the potential for misuse of the Internet so that they can effectively and proactively address this issue.

Sources

Associated Press

Grunwald Associates

International Criminal Police Organization

Ipsos Reid Group

Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department

New York Daily News

San Diego Police Department

United Nations
- International Narcotics Control Board

U.S. Department of Commerce
- Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Justice
- Drug Enforcement Administration
  - Detroit Division
  - Headquarters Intelligence Division
  - Houston Division
  - Miami Division
  - New Orleans Division
  - Phoenix Division
  - St. Louis Division

Washington Times

319 Washington Street 5th Floor, Johnstown, PA 15901-1622 • (814) 532-4601
Information Bulletins are available on the Internet at www.usdoj.gov/ndic

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
X	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").